

147.

PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY CONSIDERED.

A

FUNERAL SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE DEATH OF

Mr. THOMAS STURGIS;

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

The SPEECH delivered at the GRAVE.

By JOHN MARTIN. *H*

HE BEING DEAD, YET SPEAKETH.

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PREFACE.

To stand up in defence of real christianity, such as used in primitive times, to have an influence upon mens belief and actions, has long since been considered by some, as a wild project. Yet, it is well known, that primitive christianity, was enjoyed by men of like passions with ourselves: and, I venture to assert, that, they who are partakers of the same grace which was granted unto them, will endeavour to approach as near as possible, to the primitive standard.

Acts ii. 41, 42.

A 2

If

If they who believed in Christ, in the first century, had greater assistance than we can expect, they had also those trials to endure we have not yet met with, and those temptations to resist, which none of us have ever been exposed unto.

It must, however, be confessed, that any thing like primitive christianity, is, by no means, very common in this country; yet we sometimes meet with them, whose faith and practice, would have been commended, had they lived in the purest age of the christian church.

As examples of this sort fall under our notice, if it is not our duty to make them public, it cannot be criminal to be so employed. He that is thus engaged, may feel a stronger inclination to follow faithful men, than he had felt before, and may form those resolutions he would never wish

wish to break. He may also, excite others to consider what the genuine effects of christianity are, and convince them, that the gospel is, and only is, the power of God unto salvation.

Good men are not dead to honest fame; if they were, the best examples would be useless unto them; whereas, by having a high esteem of those worthies who have obtained a good report, they have always acted a better, and a wiser part, than they could have acted in any other disposition. In belief of this, many writers have been induced to give the public some account of eminent christians, in very different conditions in life; and their pious memorials of such men, and women, have been much owned and blessed of God, both abroad and at home.

What is here said of Mr. STURGIS, deserves the greater attention, because nothing

nothing of any moment, is said of him in the following pages, that can be contradicted. He is not flattered, though deceased; nor is he held up to posterity, better, or worse, than he lately appeared amongst us.

To be sure, the following account of him, forms nothing more than the outline of his christian character: but they who knew him best, will, perhaps, allow, it recalls to their minds, the leading, and peculiar features of that worthy man; whom, while he was living, they so much esteemed, and for whose memory they still retain great respect.

Both the Sermon, and the Address at the Grave, are published at the request of the surviving widow.



PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANITY, &c.

ROMANS XIV. 8.

FOR, WHETHER WE LIVE, WE LIVE UNTO
THE LORD: AND WHETHER WE DIE, WE
DIE UNTO THE LORD: WHETHER WE
LIVE THEREFORE, OR DIE, WE ARE THE
LORD'S.

IT has often been said, that in necessary things there should be unity; in things not necessary, liberty; and in all things, prudence and charity. This moral maxim, seems to agree with the chapter now before us. But we are not to suppose, this maxim can be properly regarded by any man, till he confides

fides in that object to whom he may safely live and die: and even then, it will be found extremely difficult to be always under the influence of such pacific sentiments.

But my present business is to explain the words of my text.—In it are these assertions. “ We live unto the Lord.” “ We die unto the Lord.” “ We are the Lord’s.” The words however, may be thus transposed. “ We are the Lord’s: therefore, whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord.” And indeed, this seems to be the natural order of things: for, whoever is the Lord’s, must first be his by election, redemption, and effectual calling, before he can possibly live and die unto him.

To live unto the Lord, is, conscientiously, to be subject to his revealed will, and to make his moral precepts, and positive institutions, the rule of our religious conduct. To die unto the Lord, is to be devoted to his pleasure in the discharge of our duty; leaving it with him to determine, where, when, and how we are to depart; whether at home,

home, or abroad, whether in youth, or in old age; whether by a natural or by a violent death.

But of whom does the apostle speak in our text? Of nominal christians? Certainly not. For of them he often spake weeping, Phil. iii. 18. And of some in the churches of Galatia, he stood in doubt, Gal. iv. 20. That he spake of himself, and of others who, as well as himself, were strong in faith, must be admitted. But this interpretation, does, by no means, come up to the full force of his assertions. Since, from the context, it is evident, that the weak in faith are included.

For those weak christians, who had put on the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul was an advocate; and, to one of their audacious opposers, he said, Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant? To his own master, which thou art not, he standeth, or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up; for God, his own master, is able to make him stand.

B

But

But this able advocate for weak christians, certainly, did not intend to give the least countenance to many inferences which have been frequently drawn from this chapter. Nothing in it, argues the least indifference to any christian doctrine, or duty. On those subjects, it was not the apostle's practice to give place to any man; no, not for an hour.

Let us, however, recollect, that if the primitive christians lived to the Lord, they, all of them, lived to him in their respective stations. Let us consider, that they, as well as ourselves, were born of such parents, at such a time, in such a place, and also, with those natural endowments, and propensities, that made them, in many things, greatly differ from one another. What a pleasing sight must it have been, to have beheld multitudes of men and women, wonderfully diversified in their tempers, capacities, and conditions in life, yet, all of them depending on the same Lord, and cleaving to him, under manifold temptations, with purpose of heart!

How

How are we to account for this union? It was formed by faith: and to each of these primitive believers, Christ was precious. They believed, that his love was incomparable, and that his authority was supreme. They believed, he had power to protect them while they manifested their allegiance to him, and that whatever they might suffer on this account, they could never have any just reason to repent of their professed subjection to Jesus Christ. They believed, that only by his atonement, they could possibly have acceptance with God, or even access unto him. They believed, that the will of their ascended Lord, and the will of his heavenly father, were always, and in all things, the same; and they concluded, that to live unto him, was at once the safest, and highest ground of human action. Thus were they united, by faith and love, and from both, they have obtained that good report, which has been admired almost two thousand years, and which will be no less admired to the end of the world.

HAVING seen of whom the apostle said those things which are mentioned in my text, let us now consider to whom it may be applied.

The rule of application is truth; over which, none of us, have any dominion. So far then, as Mr. Sturgis lived to the Lord, and at length died unto him, he himself, made the best application of the text; and I may safely report what I know of this for your edification. But then, to answer this end, my report must not be vague and loose. We must not fancy him to have been what he was not, but carefully keep in view where he lived, and when: we must consider what was his occupation, and what were his natural, and voluntary connections. In short, he must be presented to our minds, not in the clouds of abstraction, but clothed, as it were, with all those circumstances which used to attract our attention, while he was our companion, and our friend.

It was not the duty of Mr. Sturgis to have lived to the Lord, in any other country than

than this, nor at any other time in it, than that in which he dwelt amongst us. Nor was it his duty to have lived to the Lord, in any other condition in life, than the condition allotted for him: and in that, I think it will be allowed, very few of our acquaintance walked more closely with God than Mr. Sturgis.

But, what I have further to say of him, must be an abridged account; and probably, that abridgment, will be thought too copious by some; while to others, it may appear too contracted. In this part of my discourse, I must, therefore, rely on my own discretion; which, I hope, will not be too rigorously examined.

Let me, in the first place, remark, that Mr. Sturgis never made any pretence of living to Jesus Christ, under any other notion of that Lord, than his being the Saviour of sinful men: nor in any other thought of himself, at any time, than his being a sinful creature. In this belief, many years ago, he received the atonement; and from that sacred ground

ground of his confidence in God, he was never allured, nor driven away.

As his heart was fixed, trusting in the Lord, so his duties were such in their nature, number, and value, that cannot be accounted for on any other principle. All his duties centered in one point; doing that which he thought to be well pleasing to God through Jesus Christ. Had it been otherwise, how could we be interested in any memoirs of him? But his terror will not make us afraid. He was a man of like passions with ourselves. Yet possibly, what I have to say of his unaffected piety, will make most of us blush, if we contrast it with our own slender attainments.

What has been hitherto said of Mr. Sturgis, must, I am sure, have met with his approbation, had he now sat where he used to sit, and heard my first remark. I think, he would have said, "Had this been omitted, I should have thought, you did not intend to glorify God in me."

Our

Our profession, or occupation in life, is of more consequence to our peace and comfort in this world, than is commonly supposed; yet this, is more under the direction of providence, than is often acknowledged. Parents, at first, amuse themselves by talking of the future settlement of their children: afterwards, they are more serious on that pressing subject. They find, something must be done, and are happy, if at last, that is accomplished which meets with their maturer approbation. The Father of Mr. Sturgis had that pleasure. He was an Apothecary; and wished his son to make choice of the same profession. He did so; and I believe, he never wished to change it for any other; nor had he any intention to lay aside his practice, while he thought he could be of any service to his fellow men.

In this respectable, and useful employment, Mr. Sturgis, not only obtained a sufficient subsistence for himself and family, but something to spare for his relations and friends: and few, in his circumstances, would have acted more liberally than himself. Many are here

here this afternoon, whom, uncalled for, he visited as an Apothecary; whose cases he carefully searched out, and whose wants he cheerfully, and modestly supplied. Some indeed, are dead, who could have said agreeable things on this subject; but many yet live, who must have in grateful remembrance his unsolicited assistance. I am one of them. For more than twenty years, Mr. Sturgis, as a medical man, bestowed on me, and mine, not only his best advice, but also sent us such expensive medicines, as I believe would not have been sent us, had he expected to be paid for them.

Of his ability in his profession, my opinion concerning it is but of little consequence. Yet, I may be allowed to say, I was so well satisfied of his intelligence, and integrity, that I was willing to put my life in his hands; and the more so, because I plainly perceived he was of opinion, that every theory in medicine should give way to matters of fact, and to those circumstances, which are more various than can be described,
and

and which often are too important to be disregarded by an honest man.

As a husband, Mr. Sturgis was properly respected. He lived with his first wife, more than thirty years; and with his second, now his surviving widow, more than eight years. The former Mrs. Sturgis, was well fitted to be the companion of his youth, and of his maturer age; and the second, though now present, will permit me to say, that our friends have thought she was happily formed to be the consolation of his declining days. Both of them were honored in being so nearly related to such a man: they thought so; and on that principle, behaved to him in such a manner, as will long be mentioned to their praise.

Though Mr. Sturgis was twice married, he has left behind him only one child; a son, who is not eight years old. How much he was concerned for the welfare of this son, will, in some measure, appear, from a card that was found amongst his papers. What it contains, is written in that delicate man-

ner, which Mr. Sturgis usually indulged, when he ventured to give advice, and which he indulged, even on the present occasion. The words on this card are these.

“ If I was to give advice to my son
 “ Thomas, it would be to aim to do what I
 “ myself wish to do. In all my conduct to
 “ have a regard to the approbation of God.
 “ —With respect to men, I wish to aim to
 “ do that which deserves their approbation ;
 “ not to seek their applause.—Without divine
 “ aid, our depravity is so great, we cannot
 “ even aim to please God. If we obtain grace
 “ to aim, it must be by the same operation
 “ of the spirit of grace, that worketh in us,
 “ both to will and to do that which is pleasing
 “ in his sight ; and who preserves us from
 “ being so base as to be proud of his un-
 “ merited kindness to us.”—May our young
 friend for whose use this card was written, live
 to know the worth of such instruction, and
 to bless God for such a parent !

Con-

Considered as a brother, and an uncle, Mr. Sturgis had loud calls to manifest a christian disposition; and they were obeyed. Two of his sisters were unhappily married, and were soon brought into that kind of distress, which words, however pleasing, could not remove. But Mr. Sturgis did not content himself by saying unto them, Depart in peace; be ye warmed, and filled; but gave them those things that were needful, and lent them also, what was useful. This he did so often, in such a manner, and with so much decrease of his own property, as to shew, (if I may so express it) that he was born for adversity. His six surviving nephews, and niece, who hear me say these things, are, all of them, of sufficient age to recollect many instances of their uncle's kindness, both to their parents, and to themselves; and each of them, I hope, will not only long call to mind his benevolence, but be disposed, to follow his example.

MR. STURGIS, of whom I have said these things, was born at Whitchurch, in Hampshire

shire, in the year 1728. In a letter written to the former Mrs. Sturgis, in the year 1774, and directed to her at Margate, he has left behind him some memoirs of himself, which should not be overlooked; because that letter contains some additional traits of his character, which his relations and friends will think worthy of their notice.

“ I had,” says Mr. Sturgis, “ the advantage of an education under parents, “ who, both of them, feared the Lord; “ which was a mean of restraining me from “ open profaneness; and I have reason to “ praise the Lord for his distinguishing goodness in this matter. My father died when “ I was fourteen years of age; and left “ my mother in strait circumstances. A “ short time after my father died, providence “ opened a way for my coming to London; “ where I arrived, December the 15th, 1742; “ and was bound apprentice to Mr. Fyler, “ an Apothecary, in Mount-Street, Grosvenor-Square, May the 15th, 1743. Soon “ after this, I had little or no opportunity “ to attend on the Lord’s Day at any place “ of

“ of worship. However, the Lord, who is
“ not confined to any particular means, was
“ pleased, when I was ill of an ague, to put
“ me under a concern about a readiness for
“ death ; at which time, I perused a book
“ called The Whole Duty of Man, and made
“ conscience of attempting to pray ; and was
“ particularly concerned about keeping the
“ sabbath. And though before I came to
“ London, I thought myself religious, yet then
“ I had no conviction of my ignorance ;
“ but now, I had sensible conviction of it,
“ and in this respect, was become a little
“ child ; willing to be taught, and instructed,
“ by any body. This concern of mind,
“ with a sense of my ignorance, were not, as
“ I can recollect, attended with any degree
“ of terror ; but was attended with a desire of
“ knowing, and obeying the will of God, and
“ of being directed by him ; which I was
“ enabled to lift up my soul to him for, by
“ way of ejaculatory prayer.”

" while I was on enquiry how properly to
 " observe the Lord's Day, a poor man, who
 " came into the shop, entered into con-
 " versation with me, and spoke to me con-
 " cerning the love of Christ, and of being
 " justified by faith: when the spirit of the
 " Lord, who opened the heart of Lydia,
 " opened, I hope, my understanding to un-
 " derstand, and my heart to approve of,
 " love, and receive Jesus Christ, and his
 " righteousness."

" Ever since that time, so far from being
 " disposed, on that consideration, to sin, I
 " have every day since, been conflicting
 " with sin: and though, to my great grief,
 " I have been often foiled, yet it is when I
 " am not in the exercise of faith on Christ,
 " and his righteousness. And I think, if I
 " know any thing, I know, and feel, sin to
 " be a daily burden, and the greatest burden
 " I have in the world: nor will any thing
 " satisfy my soul, but a total destruction of
 " that abominable, loathsome, and detestable
 " evil, and being enabled perfectly to obey,
 " and glorify, the great and glorious God,
 " Father,

“ Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. To whom
“ be everlasting praise. Amen.”

The account which Mr. Sturgis has given of his conversion, in this letter, I have abridged, and shall leave it, without any comment of mine, to speak for itself: but his gratitude to his parents, I beg leave to re-mention; because his conduct towards them proves, that his affectionate regard for his father and mother, was deeply rooted.

When they were old, and unable to pay some debts they had unavoidably contracted, they felt what old and honest people feel, in such an unpleasing situation. Their son saw their distress, and promised, as soon as he was able, to pay their debts. He lived to perform his promise; and I have been told, that till he had finished this pious business, he excused himself from contributing to some extra expences attending this place of worship. Such conduct is truly christian; and, in my opinion, such behaviour should always be commended by the ministers of Jesus Christ.

Mr.

Mr. Sturgis joined this church in January, 1748; when it was under the pastoral care of the Rev. Mr. Anderson. In his time also, he was chosen to be a deacon, and in that office, he died; greatly respected by the surviving deacons of this church, and by his fellow members: perhaps, without a single exception.

From October, 1773, I have been almost a constant witness of his religious behavior; and I feel myself at liberty to say, I know not of any among my acquaintance, whose life approached nearer to the primitive standard, than the life of Mr. Thomas Sturgis. What I have said of him, is not of that fanciful, extatic complexion, that certain disordered persons will admire; but something far better. He was sound in the faith; and in the family, church, and world, a tried, honest, and respectable man.

Should it be asked, by what means he obtained this character amongst us, I answer, chiefly, by his conscientious regard for the word of God, and for prayer. With the Bible

Bible, he was well acquainted; and in prayer, he was very frequent, earnest, and solemn. When he prayed in public, he usually *paused* longer before he began to speak, than is common, even among serious people. After such a pause, in a soft, and ardent voice, his words flowed out accompanied with that good sense, and unction, that made them pleasant words to his listening friends. This, indeed, was not always the case; for who is always alike? Yet this was so often repeated, and with so much satisfaction to myself, that I most sincerely wish, we may all of us, manifest such reverence of God, and such unaffected devotion, as we have often observed in him.

—But, his occasional starts of temper, and his tedious manner of speaking sometimes, at our church meetings?—Why, it must be confessed, he was liable to be irritated as well as other people: and it cannot be denied, he sometimes met with those things that were very provoking. I own also, that occasionally, he indulged a mode of thinking, somewhat different from those who had thought but little of the subject in debate; and that, in

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delivering his sentiments, he was not always so pleasing, nor so expeditious, as some of his friends expected. But they who were more attentive to his meaning, than to his words, were, in general, well repaid for their trouble. Let me add, that if any of us have been witness to his want of temper, none of us can say, he ever indulged lasting, or indecent sentiments.—Had Mr. Sturgis nothing more to lament in private, than the defects of his public behaviour, I should be unable to account for many things I have observed in his papers. But he was a strict, and severe reprover of himself; and they who best know the plague of their own hearts, will not wonder that the secret confessions of eminent christians, should be expressed in stronger terms, than in the loose, and general expressions of them who know but little of their own depravity.

In the beginning of his last affliction, December 1794, Mr. Sturgis seemed to be oppressed with a deep sense of the sinfulness of sin. But even then, his dependance on Christ remained stedfast; and into his hands, often,

often, and in a very solemn manner, he committed himself, and all his concerns.

When he was led a little further into the valley of the shadow of death, he feared no evil; for God was with him. Of this, he gave abundant evidence during his long confinement; and was, in every part of it, constantly thankful for those mercies which he then received. In short, the scriptures which he quoted, the prayers which he made, the praise which he offered to God; his conversation whith his friends, his advice to some of them, his caution to others, and the good will be manifested to all about him, left none of us, who were witness of these things, in any doubt, whether Mr. Sturgis had received the grace of God in truth, or, whether he had believed to the saving of his soul.

The last interview I had with him, the night before he died, our devotion, while in prayer, was serious, and afterwards, our mutual friendship was pleasant. But, I own, I left him that evening expecting to see him again. In this, I was disappointed. I therefore re-

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quested his nephew, Mr. Chevalier, who now succeeds him in business, to give me some account of his last moments; and from the tender and respectful letter, which he sent me on that subject, I have made the following extracts.

DEAR SIR,

Agreeable to your request, I now send you an account of the most *material* circumstances relating to the *last* day, (Friday, March 27th) that my uncle spent on earth. The state of extreme weakness to which he was reduced, caused him then to be very restless and uneasy, and rendered the faculties of his mind so feeble, and confused, that all the former part of the day, his expressions were quite incoherent and unconnected. But towards noon, after he had been dozing a few minutes, he gradually aroused a little; and calling me, "Chevalier," said he, "Jesus Christ, he is the mediator: an't he?" "Yes, Sir," said I, "he is." "Yes," said he, "the

“ the only mediator, between God and man.
“ Lord Jesus Christ, God everlasting, do
“ thou undertake my cause. Into thy hand
“ I commit my cause. Do thou support me,
“ and be my helper.” He was then silent for
several minutes: but presently after, desired
to be raised up, which he was. “ Well,”
said he, “ And the time drew near that Israel
“ must die.” After pausing a little, and
taking something that was given him, he said,
“ O Lord, the Father of our Lord Jesus
“ Christ, into thy hands, I commit myself,
“ and my wife, and my child, and all my
“ family.—Fear not, for I am with thee;
“ be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I
“ will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee;
“ yea, I will uphold thee, with the right
“ hand of my righteousness.” This pas-
sage he repeated with an emphasis, and dis-
tinctness, that, considering his weakness, sur-
prized us. He then went on. “ All my
“ hope is *there*: in God, through Jesus
“ Christ. God in our nature—who is able
“ to save to the uttermost, all that come unto
“ God by him—who of God is made unto
“ *me*, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification,
and

“ and redemption.” Being fatigued, he was then laid back, and soon afterwards, said, “ The Lord will not leave me ; there is no fear of that. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. O dear, nothing but love ; nothing but love, could have formed, and kept up this union for so many years, between Christ and me.” He was then much affected, and with tears in his eyes, looking at me, he said, “ And will he now, after so many years leave me to myself, in this last hour of weakness, and languishing ? ” “ O no, my dear Sir,” said I, “ that he won’t.—“ Not,” replied he, “ that I mean to suggest a doubt, either of his wisdom or faithfulness.” He was then quite exhausted, and desired to rest a little ; but was soon disturbed by his cough, which, after a long intermission, now returned, in a manner that convinced me his dissolution was drawing near.—In the evening, he desired me to go to prayer with him, which I did, and he seemed to listen with more attention than I thought him at that time capable of. When I had done, he took hold of my hand, as was his custom on such occasions,

and

and said, "The blessing of the Lord be with
"you." It was not long after this, that my
aunt perceived him suddenly to alter. His
eyes became fixed, and the hand of death was
evidently upon him. Just then, Doctor
Jenkins came in, whom he had expressed a
desire to see ; but he said, he found it fatigued
him so much, that he must not speak for any
body. I asked him, if Dr. J. should go
to prayer. He said, "By all means," Dr. J.
did so ; and afterwards, asked him, if he
found the Lord with him, supporting him in
the view of his immediate resolution. He
answered in the affirmative : but it was with
so much difficulty he spake, that we did not
think it proper to fatigue him with many
more questions. To the few that were asked,
he returned answers, which, though short,
were pertinent, and expressive of the same
unshaken confidence in Jesus Christ; and at
length expired without a sigh, or a groan, li-
terally falling asleep in Jesus, at twenty mi-
nutes past eleven o'clock.

Dear Sir, it is with much emotion I recall
these particulars to mind. I have, however,
often

often recalled them, and often shall. They are among the many remembrances I must ever cherish of an honored uncle, whose life and comfort, I can truly say, were precious to me ; and whose memory will ever be dear.

I am, dear Sir,

Yours affectionately,

T. CHEVALIER.

Thursday night,

April 9, 1795.

HAVING now paid that tribute of respect to the memory of Mr. Sturgis, which I thought was due to him, and said those things that I supposed might be useful for you to hear, I shall only add the following remarks.

If such are the genuine effects of a settled faith in Jesus Christ ; if they who are under its influence, live unto the Lord, and die unto him ; if for them to live is Christ, and to

to die is gain ; if it be so *now*, as well as in the first century, how excellent, and how divine, is the christian religion !

Excellent, because it is every way suited to the real condition of sinful creatures. It fully informs them what they are in the sight of God ; allows them to suppose, they are sinful beyond conception, and, in spiritual things, weak beyond expression. In such a state, it brings near, without fee, or reward, that righteousness, peace and joy, by Jesus Christ, that swallows up all that can be called death, in victory. These glad tidings, angels admire, believers embrace, and the Lord himself, in every age confirms.

How divine then, is this excellent religion ! Who but the Almighty can thoroughly convince any man of sin ? Who but the Lord Jesus, could bring in everlasting righteousness, and by the sacrifice of himself, make a glorious end of iniquity, transgression, and sin ? Who but the eternal spirit, could reveal such glad tidings, and enable any man, with the heart to believe them, and with his mouth firmly

to say, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I am willing to suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having on my own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God, by faith?—He that does not see the hand of God in all this, has reason to conclude, that the God of this world hath blinded his eyes, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto him.

What therefore, must we think of them, who, in this country, reject the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, and who evidently disdain to make a profession of the christian religion?

Will they say, that christianity is an imposture? or, if it be not, it is at least unimportant, and not worth their notice? Have they any thing of greater, or of equal moment, which claims their attention?—But some, who do not make a public profession
of

of the christian religion, argue thus : " Those
 " persons who, by their own choice, have
 " made such a profession, and have submit-
 " ted to the positive institutions of christi-
 " anity, are, by so doing, under peculiar ob-
 " ligations to walk in constant obedience to
 " Jesus Christ : whereas, we, who have not
 " done this, are more at liberty to live and
 " act, as we think proper.

Now, can any thing shew a stronger at-
 tachment to the will of the flesh, than seri-
 ously to argue in this manner ? As there are
 no obligations under the gospel dispensation,
 but what are glorious, certainly, he who re-
 fuses to profess faith in Jesus Christ, lest he
 should thereby be obliged to live in greater
 subjection to his will, either forgets for
 what purpose the son of God was manifested,
 or he must confess, that purpose does not
 meet with his deliberate approbation. For to
 this end, Christ both died, and rose, and
 revived, that he might be the Lord both of
 the dead and living.

Others, it seems, will not make a public profession of the christian religion, and be in full communion with any church of Christ, lest they should afterwards dishonour their profession. Whatever some may think of their modesty, or humility, I own, I am not charmed with their behavior. Let them, in the fear of God, consider, this is in effect to say, That they judge him to be impotent, or unfaithful, who hath promised: and let them remember, that while they indulge this unbelieving temper, and applaud themselves for it, some will suppose they think it safer to be guided by their own discretion, than to be governed by the unerring counsel of the Most-High.

In the next place; What must we think of those partial professors, whose conduct seems to say, " What we find in revealed religion " to be of repute in this world, that, as it " may be convenient to us, we will occa- " sionally regard; but those things that are " unpopular, and which, were we to give " them any countenance, might deprive us of
" emo-

" emolument and power, we have no intention, or wish to esteem."

Such language, in direct terms, I suppose, is seldom heard; and, on such principles few, one would hope, dare to act. Yet, if many, both among churchmen, and dissenters, act from purer motives, it would be much to their honor to make that more evident and clear.—Some indeed, of all parties, seem to act inadvertently in their religious concerns: but why they do this, and what must be the final consequence of trifling with serious things, I fear, they have not dispassionately considered.

Again; What must we think of them, who, in any community, profess to hold those sentiments which they do not believe?

A temper so base, a behaviour so corrupt, and deception so indefensible, can only be indulged by bad men; and will only be applauded by them who know not God, and by them who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is difficult to say

say, whether the villainy, or folly, of such men is greatest. Be that as it may, what a man of God said to Eli, cannot be contradicted. The words are these: “ Them that honor me, I will honor; and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.”

Once more ; What must we think of them who profess that they know God, but in works scandalously immoral, and unrepented of, deny him ; being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate?—As they have neither faith, nor repentance, their end shall be according to their works.

But, What think we of ourselves ?—God grant, my brethren, we may never think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think ; but think soberly, as God has dealt to every one of us, the measure of faith! For, without faith, it is impossible to please God.

All that Mr. Sturgis said, and did, acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ, was said and done by faith : and he knew and acknowledged, that his faith was of Grace.—Examine
your-

(39)

yourselves whether ye be in faith: prove your own selves. May it please God, to make every one of us stedfast, and unmoveable in the faith! then we shall always be abounding in the work of the Lord, and know that our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God! Amen.

F I N I S.

THE
S P E E C H
AT THE
G R A V E.

I AM apprehensive, my friends, I cannot speak sufficiently loud in this situation, to make all of you hear my voice. But, as it now rains, if you will be covered, I will exert myself as well as I can; and I hope you may be able to hear something that is worth your notice.

As

As we advance in years, it is natural to suppose, that the thought of our own departure, makes a deeper impression on our minds than it was wont to do in early life. Now I am more than fifty, death seems to be more certain, and much more solemn in my apprehension, than when I was but fifteen. Yet there are certain seasons, when all of us, I presume, think we stand in need of some consolation against the fears of death. What therefore, may best reconcile us to our own departure, and make us willing to die, whether we are old, or young, whenever it shall please God to take us hence, must, I hope, now be considered, as a word in season.

For myself, I acknowledge, that two things, more than any other, have reconciled me to my approaching removal from this world. They are, the death of our Lord, and the death of those who have died in him.

The death and life of Jesus Christ were peculiar to himself. Our first appearance in this world, was not of our choice, but of necessity; yet of that necessity, which was

regulated by the will of God. Of all this however, at our birth, we had no knowledge. But concerning Christ, it is said, Forasmuch then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself, likewise took part of the same, that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.

By these words, and others in the same epistle, it appears, that the incarnation of the Son of God, was voluntary, and that his death was not only voluntary, but also violent and vicarious: or, in plainer words, it is evident that our Lord chose to die a violent death, and by dying the just for the unjust, he was made a curse for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

This is strong consolation against the fear of death to them that believe in Christ. Or, to speak more properly, it now appears, that death itself, is to them a blessing. When Paul said to the Corinthians, Death is yours, he did, in effect, assure them, not only of their victory over death, as it was in any sense their enemy, but foretold their final advantage from it,

it, by the crucifixion of Jesus Christ: and the same victory, and the same advantage, all of us may confidently expect, who have, without guile, received his atonement.

But our Lord rose from the dead, according to the scriptures: and it fully appears, that he rose from the dead with the same love and compassion for those that believe in him, that he had so frequently manifested towards them while he was an inhabitant of this world. For forty days, after his resurrection, he tarried with his disciples, speaking unto them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Afterwards, he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight. But when he became to them invisible, Behold two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

Christ therefore, is not only risen from the dead, but is in heaven. He has entered into

the holiest of all by the virtue of his own blood, and is, on that account, able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him ; seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. The gifts which our great intercessor received for men on his ascension, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell amongst them, he dispensed with rich profusion, at, and soon after the day of pentecost : nor are those spiritual blessings yet exhausted, or withdrawn; no, they are to this hour, bestowed on them that believe in his name, and will be, more or less, enjoyed, in every age, to the end of the world.

What additional consolation does this view of our risen Redeemer impart! When the nature and variety of his donations are considered, the ground of the communication, whence our capacity to receive them, and what will be the final issue of such grace, what can make us unwilling to die, or willing to live in this world, longer than our appointed time? It must be an evil heart of unbelief; which, where ever it is, compels its possessor to depart from the living God in this world,
and

and involves him in such guilt, that if he dies in his sins, he will be driven from the Lord, and from the glory of his power, in the future state.

Next to the death of our Lord, the departure of those who have evidently died in him, gives me the most pleasing prospect of my own decease. But, on such a subject, nothing should be said of any person, in any material point, that can be contradicted. As to some circumstances, accuracy is unimportant, but he that flatters, or depreciates the deceased, is very much to blame. If truth was thoroughly esteemed, such people would be treated in a manner the most disagreeable to themselves; I mean they would be treated according to their own deserts.

The death of Christ is the only ground of our confidence in God, and of all our hope beyond the grave. For, it supposes his incarnation, and insured his resurrection. But from the last hours of them, who have enjoyed that confidence and hope, we perceive what the grace of God can effect in the utmost extremity

extremity of human weakness, and that it alone is, and only is, sufficient for us.

To *read* of the consolation, and conversation of many dying christians, is highly pleasing. I have formerly, and again of late, received considerable advantage by such narratives. Among them, I recollect, that an eminent believer, in his dying moments, said to his afflicted friends, Death is a coward. He comes behind me, (alluding to the nature of his disorder) and dares not look me in the face. This bold expression is not bolder than that of the A postle's, Death is swallowed up in victory ! and this I suppose is what the good man meant to say by his uncommon expression.

I will not detain you, in this situation, by recommending such pious memorials, as have met with my approbation ; much less, by laying before you, the reasons why I prefer them to the flattering and foolish things, that have been published in memoirs of the deceased, in funeral discourses, and under other titles, with high pretences ; but from principles and motives,

motives, I most heartily reject. Yet, just give me leave to say, that if any of you are not aware of such impositions, and that by this craft, many obtain wealth, you will do well to consult with men of more discernment than yourselves, lest you should be deceived to your hurt, and purchase that trash it is more your duty to burn than to read.

But if to read well chosen narratives is useful, it must, in many cases, afford a greater degree of satisfaction to be *eye-witnesses* of the peaceful exits of them that die in the Lord. The best written accounts of such affecting scenes, are always defective, or redundant. Those therefore, who refuse to visit their christian friends in their last afflictions, often lose one of the most useful means of instruction, and deprive themselves of those profitable opportunities, which, if they knew their value, they would gladly embrace.

I said *often*; for all who fear God, do not depart in the enjoyment of that peace and hope, that Mr. Sturgis possessed in his dying moments. Seldom indeed, have I seen any person

person draw near to death, waiting its approach, without expectation of reprieve, in a more christian temper than that good man. His stedfast faith in Christ, his resignation to the will of his Saviour, his regard for his surrounding friends, (especially for his family, his pastor, the deacons, and members of the church to which he was cordially united, (and his godly fear, lest he should do, or say, any thing unworthy of his religious profession, on his dying bed, left very serious impressions on my mind: such as I hope, will frequently be renewed.

In his last affliction Mr. Sturgis suffered much more from weakness than from pain. Often as he lay on his pillow, faint, and nearly exhausted, he was unable to raise up his head, and to lay it down again, without the most delicate assistance. If, in any of those wearisome moments, he was somewhat discouraged, the transient gloom on his mind, was generally thus removed. " Why should
 " I fear? No, I will not fear; for he hath
 " said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake
 " thee."

When

When he drew very near to his grand deliverance, a friend said to him, How are you, Sir? He replied, "Very weak. I am very weak indeed. I can do nothing." Pausing a little, he added, "And there is nothing for me to do." They who knew his religious sentiments, will enter into the spirit of this assertion, and are not likely to misinterpret his meaning.

But if they who were little more than eye-witnesses of these things, were edified by what they saw and heard, others who were constantly with him, and contributed all they could to his relief, will not only recollect much of his conversation to their own advantage, but will ruminant on their own behaviour with secret satisfaction.

Mrs. Sturgis; though I do not mean to flatter you here, at your husband's grave, nor in any other situation, yet, I would not withhold from you that applause you have so well deserved. I must say, that your attention to your husband, when he most of all stood in need of your assistance, cannot be

soon forgotten. Seasonable, and substantial acts of kindness to those who are in years, and oppressed in their natural spirits, (especially, when those acts are performed with undoubted good will, and in the fear of God,) are not to be bought with money: but what money could not purchase, you chearfully did for Mr. Sturgis. It must afford you real pleasure to look back on your late labor of love towards him: and I hope, when you need it, you yourself, will meet with the like compassion.

I know not, Mr. Chevalier, whether you had a greater regard for your uncle than others to whom he was equally related. Yet, by your profession, you had that ability to minister to his wants, and by living with him, those opportunities to grant him that assistance which they had not. You saw all this with pleasure, and recollect ed by whose kindness you were placed in that eligible situation. You did more; for your attention to your uncle, (who was indeed to you a father,) has been such as has drawn down upon you his blessing, and obtained from your best surviving friends their sincere applause.

There

There are others, both present and absent, who did what they could to serve and gratify Mr. Sturgis in his last illness : and never before, was I so much convinced, how many little attentions are necessary under the languors of life, and the gradual decay of the human frame ; nor till then, did I so much consider, how well those attentions may be taken and esteemed.

May none of you be tempted to withhold your best assistance from your afflicted friends, under a notion that any of them are better christians than yourselves, and that your feeble efforts are not worth their notice. The feeblest members in the church of Christ are necessary, and the strongest are not disposed to say to them, We have no need of you.

With what pleasure did Mr. Sturgis speak of many who visited him in his confinement ! “ Their words,” said he, “ did me good, and “ their very appearance round my bed, re-“ vived my spirits.” Among them that were useful to him, permit me, Doctor Jenkins to say, he thought himself much obliged to you

for your repeated visits, and for your christian conversation.

What shall I say concerning myself? It is a delicate subject: but a man may sometimes speak of himself with safety, and even to the advantage of other people. However, I will not dwell on this suspected theme. But I must say, my efforts to contribute to his repose of mind were not unnoticed. For, a few weeks before he died, after I had prayed with him, and was going to leave the room, he called me back to his bed side, when, looking earnestly at me, and taking me by the hand, he addressed me thus: "Yes, I may say it now. I will say it, that your visits, Sir, in season, and out of season, have always been beneficial to me." I frankly own those words, at such a time, and from such a man, were thankfully received.

And now, May those who never knew Mr. Sturgis, consider what has been the leading design of this Address. All I have said has been more or less, in answer to the question, What may best reconcile us to our own departure,

ture, and make us willing to die, whenever it shall please God to take us hence? My answer is, The death of our Lord, and the death of those who have died in him. On both these subjects, I have said nothing which I thought could be contradicted. In what temper you have heard what has been delivered, I cannot tell. May it afterwards appear, you have not heard of these things in vain!

To conclude. I hope, that all of us who knew and loved our deceased friend, are thankful that while he lived in this world, we had so much communion with him in the fellowship of the gospel—which is a kind of fellowship that death itself cannot dissolve.

Of late, we have had loud, and repeated calls, to think seriously of the future state. The Lord has removed from us many of our christian friends: and there are others, both male and female, we cannot expect again to see at Grafton-Street, nor in any other place of worship: nor can we long expect to see them at their own habitations. These are affecting events. What is life without friendship? and what

what is friendship, without christianity ? Beware however, of making in your own imagination, such christians as are no where to be found. Real christians, are willing the Lord alone should be exalted. They abound in the most ingenuous confession of sin, they have no hope but in that ample remission of their offences which they own they have never deserved, and which they thankfully, and daily accept of, that they may obtain grace to serve God with reverence, and godly fear.

To such christians turn your best attention ; and whatsoever things were lovely, and of good report in the faith and practice of Mr. Sturgis, may you often recollect ! so recollect them, that, by divine grace, you may be followers of him in well-doing, and of others, also, who now, through faith and patience inherit the promises ! Amen.

THE END.



E R R A T A.

- In Page 26 for sentiments, read resentments.
 27 for be read he
 31 for resolution, read dissolution.

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